

FIGHTING FASCIST SPAIN



WORKER PROTEST from
the PRINTING PRESS

MONTSE FEU

dedicated to the victims, and the underground dissidents' reports on civil rights infringements in Franco's Spain were prominently featured in *España Libre*.

España Libre published censored news on civil rights infringements thanks to the work of the undercover resistance in Spain and the periodical staff's collaborative and incisive journalism. This was particularly true in lesser-known cases of torture or execution. For example, in October 1940, a number of editorials denounced the political executions taking place in Spain, such as that of Catalanian president Lluís Companys. The issue's editorial, entitled "Double Monstrosity," shamed "distinguished" Spaniards in the United States for their compromised silence.⁴⁵ By pointing fingers at the exile community, *España Libre* equated the murder of the Catalan president with the lack of outraged protest in the public sphere in North America.

The terror against common people was also documented in the periodical. In September 1961, the SHC sent to its print, labor, and exile contacts (as well as the UN and President John F. Kennedy) a release for publication about the torture of eighty Basque citizens in Spain. The confederation also organized a demonstration in front of the Spanish Consulate in New York to that effect. The Workers Defense League, the Young People's Socialist League, the Catholic Worker's staff, and the Libertarian League joined the demonstration.⁴⁶ Staff writer Nieto Ruiz investigated and published several articles about the execution of Manuel Moreno Barranco in Spain. Barranco traveled to France in 1963 to present a reading of his poetry. On his return, he was tortured and killed by Franco's agents, who mistakenly thought he was working with the resistance in exile. The SHC sent smuggled photos of Moreno Barranco's corpse to Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York; however, upon being confronted, Spanish diplomats claimed that Moreno Barranco committed suicide in prison.⁴⁷ The publication of the Spanish regime's terror contested the indifference of the American mainstream media to victims of fascism in Spain. Ultimately, the SHC's claims were able to reach American politicians.

España Libre dedicated several of its front pages to denouncing Franco's state terror and praising the works of American antifascists. In early March 1952, *España Libre* published the text of a telegram that socialist Norman Thomas sent Francisco Franco asking him to halt the execution of five underground anarcho-syndicalist leaders.⁴⁸ Next to it, an editorial from *The Nation* about the execution was partially reprinted. The Workers Defense League demonstrated in front of the Spanish Consulate each week during March 1952, and *España Libre* published the dates and times of the demonstrations, encouraging readers to attend.⁴⁹ As part of these efforts, Thomas, who was demonstrating with members of the Workers Defense League, asked for an appointment with the

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"A detailed and comprehensive history of the most important newspaper and its network of artists, intellectuals, and common folk who worked together for some four decades to combat fascism in Franco's Spain. . . . Feu has successfully brought to light this important chapter in the making of the US Latino community and its transnational impact."

—**NICOLÁS KANELLOS**, author of *Hispanic Immigrant Literature: El Sueño del Retorno*

"In this groundbreaking book, Montse Feu brings together a story of immigrants, print media, and transnational solidarity. Through meticulous archival research, Feu is able to craft a fascinating interwoven history about grassroots activism, antifascist organizing, and the global circulation of radical media from the perspective of Spanish immigrants in the United States."

—**JORELL A. MELÉNDEZ-BADILLO**, Dartmouth College

"An important, deeply researched, and well-written book—the definitive work on Spanish Civil War exiles in the United States."

—**KENYON ZIMMER**, author of *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America*

In the 1930s, anarchists and socialists among Spanish immigrants living in the United States created the publication *España Libre* (*Free Spain*) as a response to the nationalist takeover in their homeland. Worker-oriented and avowedly antifascist, the grassroots periodical raised money for refugees and political prisoners while advancing left-wing culture and politics. *España Libre* charted an alternate path toward a modern Spain and endured until democracy's return to the country in 1977.

Montse Feu merges *España Libre*'s story with the drama of the Spanish immigrant community's fight against fascism. The periodical emerged as part of a transnational effort to link migrants and exiles in the United States to global antifascist networks. In addition to showing how culture and politics shaped workers' antifascism, Feu spotlights works of literature, satire, humor, and theater that encouraged allies to reject violence in favor of social revolution's potential for joy and inclusion.

MONTSE FEU is an associate professor of Hispanic studies and co-advisor of graduate studies for the Spanish program at Sam Houston State University. She is the author of *Jesús González Malo: Correspondencia personal y política de un anarcosindicalista exiliado* (1943–1965).

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